

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6454

As of January 30, 2010

Title: An act relating to defining child advocacy centers for the multidisciplinary investigation of child abuse and implementation of county protocols.

Brief Description: Defining child advocacy centers for the multidisciplinary investigation of child abuse and implementation of county protocols.

Sponsors: Senators Brandland and Stevens.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/29/10.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7316)

Background: Investigation Protocols for Child Neglect, Abuse, and Fatality. The coordination of county-based protocols has been required for child sexual abuse investigations in Washington since 1999. Since 2007 county-based protocols have also been required for the investigation of child abuse, criminal child neglect, and child fatality. Protocols are intended to coordinate a multidisciplinary investigation by the various local entities responsible for responding to the abuse, neglect, or death of children, including city and county law enforcement; child protective services; county prosecutors; emergency medical personnel; and other local agencies and advocacy groups. County prosecutors are responsible for developing the protocols in collaboration with all other entities.

Washington Association of Children's Advocacy Centers. The Children's Advocacy Centers of Washington (CACWA) is a membership association representing Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC) in the state, and providing training and technical assistance to existing and emerging CACs. The CACWA also is the Washington Chapter of the National Children's Alliance, a national membership and accrediting organization for CACs. As the state chapter of the national accrediting organization, the CACWA provides training and technical assistance to existing and developing centers, and serves as a voice and support for CACs. The common goal of the CACs and the state chapter is to ensure children are not re-victimized by the very system designed to protect them. Children's Advocacy Centers are located in the following Washington cities: Vancouver, Lacey, Montesano, Wenatchee, Tacoma, Spokane, Everett, Colville, Bingen, Bellingham, Kennewick, and Port Orchard.

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Summary of Bill: A CAC is defined as a child-focused facility in good standing with the CACWA providing coordination of a multidisciplinary process for the investigation, prosecution, and treatment of child abuse, including child sexual abuse. The CACs provide a child-friendly location for forensic interviews and help coordinate access to medical evaluations; advocacy; therapy; and case reviews within the context of the county-based protocols.

The CACs are added to the list of entities to be included in the coordination and development of county-based protocols for the investigation of child sexual abuse, child abuse, criminal child neglect, and child fatalities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: CACs create a child focused facility that brings together the professionals involved in the investigation, prosecution, and treatment of youths. There are 11 nationally accredited centers in this state and another seven communities in the process of developing an accredited center. Last year those centers saw over 4000 children. There are two reasons to support this bill: 1) it provides a definition of CACs in the statute related to child abuse; and 2) it's important to include CACs specifically in the statute dealing with the development of protocols because including CACs in the development will ensure that strong protocols are developed and that there will be adherence to the CAC model. Inclusion of the CACs in the investigatory stage will help ensure that a child centered approach to investigation will occur. Need to also define community sexual assault programs as well. Have been a key developer and organizer of sexual assault protocols in this state. The CACs are in agreement with the addition of the community sexual assault program language.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Maryanne Preece, N. Central WA Child and Family Advocacy Center; Maureen Fitzgerald, Children's Advocacy Centers of WA; Byron Manering, Brigid Collins; Andrea Piper, Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs.